

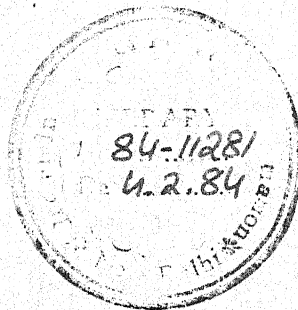
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PERSPECTIVES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS  
FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT:INDIA

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PERSPECTIVES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS FOR  
INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT : INDIA

-T.N. Chaturvedi

I. INTRODUCTION

The development goals in India have been derived from the Directive Principles of State Policy contained in the Constitution. The major thrust of these Directive Principles of State Policy is that "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life."<sup>1</sup> To attain these goals a planned approach to development has been adopted. While the immediate objectives of development plans have varied from plan to plan in the light of the prevailing economic situation, their major thrust has been to achieve economic growth and modernization coupled with social justice.

~~As almost eighty per cent of India's population live~~  
*within the above framework,*  
~~in villages and are dependent on agriculture and allied~~  
*has always formed*  
~~activities, Integrated Rural Development, forms an important~~  
~~element of the planning strategy and programmes of development~~  
*since the inception of planning in India in 1951-52.*  
~~formulated under the Five Year Plans. It stands for the~~  
~~development of rural society in all its facets - economic,~~  
~~social, institutional and administrative. However, during~~

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1. The Constitution of India, Article No. 38.

the long period of planned development and emerging dynamics of the rural situation, the content and emphasis placed on integrated rural development has also undergone various vicissitudes and changes to meet new challenges of development. These changes are discussed later in this paper. The concept of integrated rural development has now been strongly re-emphasized in the Draft Sixth Five Year Plan of India (1978-83) essentially to reiterate and remind all concerned that the new approach stands for "integrated performance" and accomplishment of all the objectives stipulated.

Integrated approach implies that there is an inter-dependence among various activities and consequently all the activities involved in the development process of the selected sector(s)/entire economy can and must contribute together and effectively to the achievement of the objectives of planned development. This integration has to take place at various levels and both within the sector(s)/programmes as also between the various sectors of the economy.

Due to the great complexity of the nature of rural under-development and the vicious circle of poverty, the need for an integrated rural development approach is being increasingly stressed today in the literature on the approaches to rural development. "The basic idea of using



integrated development methods is sound and highly desirable. No other approaches are possible apart from that of integration to reduce or eliminate regional and/or sectoral imbalances and ultimately bring about conditions favourable to self-sufficient development and the full use of local human and natural possibilities. But general proposals and formulae must not be confused with operational feasibilities and dimensions. It is advisable to formulate and plan development policies taking into account knowledge about inter-actions between phenomenon that determine rural poverty, just as it seems reasonable to acknowledge that, owing to the specific characteristics of rural development, the objectives pursued are, for reasons of efficiency, and out of necessity, multi-sectoral in character."<sup>2</sup>

## II. EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

### Community Development Programme:

The integrated approach to rural development had been recognized and accepted in India as early as 1952 with the launching of the multi-purpose Community Development Programme and setting-up of the National Extension Service. To start with, this programme was taken up on a pilot basis with a few projects but was soon extended to the entire

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2. J. Conde, M.J. Paraiso and V.K. Ayassou - The Integrated Approach to Rural Development, Health and Population, Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 1979, page 17.

country. Under this programme, each district in the country has been divided into a number of Community Development Blocks - each block covering about 100 villages.

The total number of Community Development Blocks in the country is about 5100. These blocks were constituted as primary units for rural development. For each block, an extension organization consisting of a team of <sup>6-8</sup> specialists drawn from all important development departments <sup>along with 10 common multi-purpose Village Level Workers</sup> were created. The team was to work under a single leader, called the Block Development Officer, who was also responsible to guide the common multi-purpose Village Level Workers. The main function of the team was to extend to the villagers scientific and technical knowledge in certain fields like agriculture, animal husbandry and rural industry, develop infra-structural facilities, provide certain services such as supply of agricultural inputs, and also instill in the people a desire for better living and willingness to work for the same. This programme and the above administrative arrangements were the first conscious attempts on a national scale to bring, through a project approach, the process of development to local level and to superimpose a matrix organizational structure on the existing

functional one with a view to secure the required degree of coordination and cooperation of different sectors and departments.

After some experience with the Community Development Programme, it was felt that the programme was too diffused and that the scarce resources were widely dispersed to give concrete results, especially in the field of agricultural production which was considered to be critically important for the Indian economy. While the multi-purpose approach in the programme was continued, the stress on the same was reduced to some extent and the Village Level Workers were asked to devote 80 per cent of their time to agriculture and allied activities.

Intensive Agricultural District Programme:

Following the over-riding concern with increased agricultural production, further stress was laid on the concentration of efforts for improving agricultural production in the areas with optimum potentialities for the same. This shift in emphasis came as a result of the recommendations of the First and Second Agricultural Production Teams sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The First Team submitted its report - India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet It, in April 1959. As a result, Intensive

Agricultural District Programme (IADP or Package Programme) was introduced in the country in 1960-61 in a few selected districts.

The Package Programme covered the entire area of the selected districts and the overall responsibility for the same was placed with the Collector of the district. The head of the programme in each district was an Agricultural Officer of the rank of Deputy/Joint Director of Agriculture, designated as the Project Officer. He was assisted by a Deputy Registrar of Cooperatives and other specialists in agronomy, plant protection, soil-conservation, agricultural chemistry etc. - called Subject Matter Specialists. At the Block level, the existing <sup>Extension</sup> Community Development Organization was made use of by strengthening it further by additional staff of 3-4 more Agricultural/Cooperative Extension Officers and 10 Village Level Workers.

Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme:

From the experience gained from the Intensive Agricultural District Programme or Package Programme, another programme called Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP), was introduced in March, 1964 as a result of the acceptance of the policy of concentrating efforts in areas of optimum potentialities. This programme was

like the Package Programme (IADP) in all respects except two. These being : (i) while under the Package Programme the entire district was taken up for intensive development, in the case of IAAP, only such Community Development Blocks in a district were covered which had high agricultural production potential, and (ii) in the case of IAAP, the additional complement of staff both at the District and Block Levels was less than that in the IADP districts.

This strategy of concentrating efforts in areas with optimum potentialities for agricultural growth was named as the New Strategy of Agricultural Development. The salient features of this New Strategy were : (i) stress on high yielding varieties, (ii) optimum utilization of production potential in areas with assured irrigation and rainfall by higher inputs through the intensive agricultural programmes, (iii) introduction of short duration crops and (iv) effective utilization of the irrigation potential. This strategy is still in operation.

It was soon realized that the New Strategy of Intensive Agricultural Development led to the concentration of incomes in well-developed areas and resulted in the major gains going to the relatively big farmers. *In the* Thus,

*process, the general poor and backward areas did not get any benefit thereby accentuating both regional and income disparities in the country side. Thus,*

*the New Strategy*

while it led to definite growth in agricultural production it did not help to achieve the objective of social justice and engendered further tensions in the rural society.

Special Programmes for Weaker Sections and Backward Areas:

To tackle these problems, some steps were taken during the Fourth Plan and were further intensified and strengthened during the Fifth Plan in the form of special programmes for backward areas and weaker sections of the rural society. These are mentioned below :

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|---|--|
| 1. Resource/Problem-based area programmes:    | The Drought Prone Area Programme, The Command Area Development Programme, Hill Area Development. |
| 2. Target Group Programmes:                   | The Small Farmers Development Programme, The Tribal Development Agency Project.                  |
| 3. Area Specific Incentive Programmes:        | Concessional Finance, Investment Subsidy and Transport Subsidy Schemes.                          |
| 4. Comprehensive Area Development Programmes: | Sub-Plans for the Hill and Tribal Areas.   |

As many as 340 districts have been covered by one or more of these special programmes. All these programmes are again being implemented, by and large, through the organizational set up of the Community Development Blocks.

13. The concept of integrated rural development has now been strongly re-emphasised in the Draft Sixth Five Year Plan of India (1978-83). Since the process of development implies the integration of inputs, institutions and people, sectors, agencies and programmes and beneficiaries, the use of the prefix integrated seems obviously redundant in a way. The emphasis of the word integrated probably goes to show the gasping chasm between the intent and the performance, the ideal and the reality. It has been used essentially to reiterate and remind all concerned that the new approach stands for "integrated performance" and accomplishment of all the stipulated objectives.



Current Approach to Integrated Rural Development:

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The Draft Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83) recognizes that a mere project approach or a sectoral approach is not adequate for an overall development of the area and for an equitable distribution of benefits to local population, particularly the weaker sections of society. As the magnitude of unemployment and poverty and the potential for development of agriculture and related activities vary widely from region to region, the plan lays emphasis on the formulation of area specific programmes at the grass-roots level which would utilize the available local resources and skills. "It will, therefore, be necessary to plan for integration of various programmes and establish appropriate linkages for optimal utilization of local endowment consistent with the plan objectives, local needs and environmental balance. The full employment aimed at is on a fair remuneration for the work done and the effort made so that a fully employed family can go above the poverty line."<sup>3</sup> The Plan further states that "the new approach will aim at integrating field programmes reflecting the economic activity of the rural family whose employment

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3. Government of India, Planning Commission, Draft Sixth Five Year Plan: 1978-83, page 154.

and development is the basic objective. It is proposed to bring this about by developing the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors."<sup>4</sup> The Plan also lists out the various development programmes which will have to be integrated.<sup>5</sup> Infrastructure services would form part of the respective sectors and be settled on the basis of established criteria and priority. The Coordination Committee in the area would coordinate the implementation of the infrastructure and social services programmes. All this requires formulation of comprehensive Block Level Plans and identification of programmes for development which would make full use of the local endowments. The effort could best be made at the district level.

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4. Ibid., page 154.

5. The Draft Sixth Plan visualizes the integration of the following programmes, as the first approximation :

- i) Programmes of agricultural development;
- ii) Programmes of animal husbandry;
- iii) Programmes of inland water and brackish water fisheries;
- iv) Programmes of marine fishery;
- v) Programmes of social forestry to provide a base for fuel and fodder etc.;
- vi) Programmes of farm forestry through the small peasant house-holds;
- vii) Village and cottage industries as a full or part-time occupation;
- viii) Service sectors of the rural economy as self-employment sectors for the farm families; and
- ix) Labour programmes of skill formulation and labour mobility.

Land Reforms: Instrument for Structural Change:

Among the various elements in the strategy for integrated rural development with major focus on the removal of poverty, is the crucial need for land reforms because the distribution of land is the principal determinant of final social structure providing the basis for power, status and access to public goods and all the inputs required for future growth. In most poor countries, India included, there is a small sub-sector made up of large farmers producing mainly for the market while the overwhelming majority of the agrarian population have access to land only in small operational units. Among them, a large proportion are tenants and share-croppers, while the growing percentage of landless labourers provide only their labour on land owned or rented by other families.

Introduction of capital and technology into a system characterised by large disparities in rights to land and other assets increases the polarization of economic opportunity, even to the point of evicting tenants and other small farmers from their land. Conversely, a restructured land tenure system can open up wider opportunities to utilize new technology.

Many of the development programmes that seek to improve rural living conditions tend to ignore the complicated local relationships of wealth and power and their dependency on land as an asset. Rural inequalities stemming from land holdings are highly significant and cannot be ignored in rural development planning. In addition to economic power, rural landed elite possess social and political power through control over village and local institutions including cooperatives, Panchayati Raj bodies etc. Through their links with political and administrative institutions, their interests are upheld in national policies and they are able to corner all the benefits funnelled to their areas. At the same time, in their situation of dependency, the rural poor find it extremely difficult to oppose the land owners and the rich peasants.

No rural development programme can succeed unless these relationships are radically altered through changed land owning structure<sup>②</sup>. Therefore, among other things, the Plans also lay considerable stress on speedy implementation of the land reforms so as to bring about a more equitable distribution of land resources. However, the will to implement this policy has been sadly lacking, especially

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because "adequate progress towards the multiple economic, social and political goals of development cannot be accomplished in the absence of radical agrarian reform. Whether the aim is to achieve sustained economic growth, or to reduce social disparities, or to consolidate strong political institutions that can bypass local elites to penetrate the villages, it is essential to alter the pattern of economic concentration in the rural sector. This involves some significant redistribution of productive assets, particularly land, to ensure minimum levels of viability to larger number of small holdings. It also requires some degree of change in agrarian organisation from individual to cooperative patterns of economic activity, both to augment capacities for investment on capital projects as well as ancillary agricultural enterprises, and to create additional employment opportunities for the growing numbers of marginal farmers and landless labourers".<sup>9 6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 9. Francine R. Frankel - India's Political Economy, 1947-1977: The Gradual Revolution, 1978, page 548.

7. Government of India, Draft Sixth Five Year Plan: 1978-82, pages 131-132.

by the State Governments who are actually responsible for the task. The Sixth Plan emphasizes that "every attempt will be made to complete the process of land reforms.....for better implementation of land reforms, it will be essential to involve the beneficiaries by setting up village committees. Some of the States have made provisions in the law for such committees. Provision for such committees should be made by other States as well. However, to make these committees more effective, action is required in two directions:(i) Substantial representation of the beneficiaries on the committees; and (ii) vesting these committees with adequate powers in implementing the land reforms legislation."<sup>6-7</sup>

People's Participation: Move Towards  
Democratic Decentralization:

Effective institutional arrangements for public participation in rural development is another important requirement. It was realized within a few years of the working of the Community Development Programme that one of the less successful aspects of the programme was in respect of evoking popular initiative. Initially public participation at the block level was sought to be promoted through nominated representatives of the rural community. It was felt that since public involvement was not representative

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6. Ibid., pages 131-132.

7. Government of India, Planning Commission,  
Draft Sixth Five Year Plan: 1972-82,  
pages 131-132.



enough, it was not effective to the extent required. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) stressed the need for creating within the district a well organized democratic structure of administration in which the village panchayat could be organically linked with popular organizations at higher levels. In January, 1957, the Government of India appointed a Study Team under the chairmanship of Mr. Balwantray Mehta to study and report on Community Development Projects and National Extension Service. The Mehta Study Team offered two broad directional thrusts : (i) it argued that there should be administrative decentralization for the effective implementation of the development programmes, and (ii) the decentralized administrative system should be under the control of elected bodies. It stated that "development cannot progress without responsibility and power. Community development can be real only when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibility, exercises the necessary power through its chosen representatives and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance of local administration. With this objective, we recommend an early establishment of statutory local bodies and devolution to them of the necessary resources, power and authority."<sup>78</sup> The report recommended the establishment of three tier rural

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87. Report of the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service, November, 1957.



local government institutions at the village, block and district levels, known as the Panchayati Raj Institutions. According to the report, this was the meaning of democratic decentralization in operational terms. It said that the basic unit of democratic decentralization should be located at Block Samiti Level. It contemplated just an advisory role for the district tier (Zila Parishad).

Based on the broad suggestions of the Mehta Study Team, most of the country was covered with Panchayati Raj Institutions in the succeeding decade. In a country of India's size and diversity, there were certain regional variations in the institutional set up. There was also certain unevenness in the performance of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. This was inevitable. However, the fact remains that wherever there had been effective decentralization of authority and responsibility to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, as in the case of Gujarat and Maharashtra States, they have actively participated in the development process.

In order to strengthen the decentralized system of planning and development and to make it more effective, the Government of India, in consultation with State Governments and Union Territories, set up a Committee to enquire into

the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions in December, 1977 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Asoka Mehta. The Committee submitted its report in August, 1978.<sup>8 9</sup> It has recommended that "all the development functions relating to a district which are not being discharged by the State Government would have to be placed under the Zila Parishads. Some of the functions which can be so decentralized include: agriculture and allied sectors, health, education, communications, rural industries, marketing, welfare of backward classes, family welfare, etc. Even under these heads, certain parts may have to be with the State Governments. Thus, functions such as agricultural research, college and university education, medium irrigation projects and other similar items involving complications or cutting across district boundaries may not be transferred to Zila Parishads."<sup>8 10</sup>

The Committee further recommended that "under the new scheme envisaged by us, the decentralization would commence with the district as the first point and further

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9 <sup>8</sup>. Government of India, Department of Rural Development, Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, 1978.

10 <sup>8</sup>. Ibid., page<sup>8</sup> 182-183.

movement below will take place depending upon the situation in each State. Broadly the Zila Parishad will handle all the decentralized State programmes and plan for them at the district. The Mandal Panchayats will handle the implementation work."<sup>10</sup>

Dealing with planning, the Committee observed, "with the district as the strategic level for economic planning, the Zila Parishad should be made responsible for planning at the district level. The appreciation of the total resources, the credit availability and the necessary strategy formulation covering several blocks would be feasible at the district level. An elected Zila Parishad would also provide the much needed correctives to the techno-economic plans. The production and employment programme prepared at the block level will fit into the totality of the plan. The State Government would have to provide continuous assistance in the process of district planning. It would have to ensure that the national objectives relating to weaker sections are pursued by the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They will also have to provide the financial and physical parameters as well as technical expertise to the technical group. It should

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10. Ibid., page 183.

also ensure equitable allocation of resources and fixation of long-range priorities."<sup>11</sup> These recommendations are pragmatic and have created a good deal of thinking on the subject.

The Committee has also made corresponding recommendations for the appropriate structuring and organising of the administrative structure to carry out effectively the above responsibilities. It has also recommended suitable budgetary devolution from the State Government to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Besides, it has recommended that the Panchayati Raj Institutions should also mobilise enough resources of their own through taxes and fees.

Major Components of Planning and Implementation System:

The planning and administration of rural development is at present organized through various agencies at central, state and district levels. The principal components of the system broadly are :

1. The Planning Commission and the various functional ministries at the federal level;
2. The National Development Council (NDC), chaired by the Prime Minister and comprising of the Chief Ministers of all the States. This is an institutional device evolved to consult and secure the cooperation

of the State Governments for federal policies, especially in those areas which are constitutionally allotted to State sphere. The NDC also discusses and resolves problems in implementing programmes of development;

3. The <sup>in</sup> / State governments, <sup>under</sup> / whose sphere of authority and responsibility most of the projects and programmes of rural development come under, the State Planning Departments, are charged with the responsibility of planning and monitoring the State plans. Some States have set up Planning Boards though with differing capabilities;
4. At the district level, there is an elected body, namely, Zila Parishad, and the administration head of the district represented by the District Collector and his complement of staff;
5. Panchayat Samiti which is an elected body at the block level and Block Development Officer with his functional Extension Officers to implement the ~~programmes~~ projects;
6. At the village level, the Village Level Worker, Panchayat Secretary, Inspector or Sub-Inspector of Cooperative Societies, village level revenue functionary known as 'Patwari';

7. In addition, there are a number of autonomous agencies like Commercial Banks, Marketing Institutions, Agricultural Research Institutions, other Educational and Social Welfare Institutions, etc. Coordinated action on the part of various agencies is required at each stage of management viz., policy formulation, planning, programming, implementing, including budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. It also requires clearcut delineation of tasks, authority and lines of command, coordination both horizontal and vertical.

### III. PERSPECTIVES OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT : ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES

In view of the great diversity and varied intensity and magnitude of problems in rural India, it will neither be desirable nor possible to evolve a set of standardized organizational arrangement for the entire country. These arrangements will have to have a great amount of flexibility within a broad pattern to meet the specific problems of different areas. The discussion of appropriate organizational arrangements for integrated rural development in this paper is thus being kept in the form of a broad framework as it is obviously not possible to cover all the

variations involved. Administrative reforms for integrated rural development must take into account not only the socio-economic structure but also the mobilization and implementational capability<sup>ing</sup> of the administrative apparatus, particularly from the viewpoint of an effective delivery system and support in respect of the different aspects of rural development. Administrative reforms must also make an impact on the administrative environment as well as administrative capacity in conformity with the exacting tasks and implications of integrated rural development.

a) Institutional/Administrative Arrangements for Integrated Rural Development : Some Important Underlying Principles :

Before we take up further the discussion of the issues, we may briefly touch upon some underlying principles involved in working out a suitable and effective organizational system for integrated rural development:

1. "It would be desirable if the decision-making and implementation structures are to take the form of multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral bodies or teams (with participation by locally elected people, for example) at all levels. Some training in team work is possible.



2. "A system of vertical team coordination will permit the introduction of machinery for transmitting information from the top to the bottom and vice-versa, and for staff supervision.
3. "The clear-cut allocation of responsibilities at all levels is important, and so is clearly defined decision-making power. The officer on the ground should not be afraid to submit a severe evaluation or to make a negative report."<sup>12/13</sup>

In operational terms, as has been suggested by a distinguished expert, these could be listed as :

- "The devolution of authority for planning, budgeting, implementation (including financial authority) of development programmes and projects from the Centre to the periphery.
- " A precise definition of authority as between the Centre and the periphery.
- "Institutional arrangements at the periphery and at the Centre (specifically designed as early warning systems) for monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and projects.

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<sup>13</sup> 12. J. Conde, M.J. Paraiso and V.K. Ayassou - Op. Cit., page 23.

- "The mobilization and organization of the local population, and of specific interest groups such as the absolute poor, in their own self-management organizations to take over the functions of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- "The availability of trained cadres at the periphery, both in the government agencies and in the self-management organizations of the people, for carrying out the tasks of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- "Information systems at the local level to support planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities.
- "Mutual feed-back linkages between the periphery and the Centre and amongst peripheral units .
- "A recognition, and an acceptance by the development administration system, of the changed role of the Centre as a catalytic and facilitative role rather than as a directive and controlling role."<sup>13</sup> <sup>14</sup>

~~These~~  
They really constitute the yardstick for assessing the moving equilibrium of administrative reforms for integrated rural development which is an area where purely

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<sup>13</sup> 14. Shelton Wanasinghe - Administrative Reform for Decentralized Development (The Sri Lankan Experience) paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Administrative Reforms for Decentralized Development, New Delhi, 17-21, September 1979, page 42-3.

mechanical approach may not suffice and where complicated human issues of far reaching social and economic significance be involved.

The effective management of integrated rural development thus implies establishing multi-disciplinary or multi-sectoral teams with clear cut allocation of responsibility for integrated planning and coordinated action for implementation of programmes at various levels, vertical and horizontal flow of information and communication systems for planning, implementing, monitoring/review and evaluation and also involvement of people's representatives in the formulation and implementation of development programmes.

Due to historical reasons and operational arrangements, the district as a unit of administration for rural development has been playing and will continue to play a pivotal role. The district in India with an average area of 9000 sq. kms. and a population of 1.5 million has a distinct identity and all the administrative infrastructure to formulate and implement programmes of development at district level. Therefore, all the above requirements for integrated rural development will have to be woven into the district administration including the Community

Development Blocks which are the next lower rural development units within the district set up.

b) Some Important Issues and Steps in Strengthening Existing Institutional/Administrative System :

In the above background, we may now briefly list out and discuss some important issues and steps involved in further improving and strengthening the existing organizational/institutional arrangements at the district and lower levels for effective management of the integrated rural development. Among the important issues involved in different facets of district administration, the one principle of crucial importance is the need for decentralization of administration because "decentralization, besides operational autonomy for the field administrators which it involves, signifies meaningful participatory role for them. Effective field administration requires an appropriate psychology of work, a high level of morale, commitment, and identification. It emanates partly from comprehension, at both emotive and intellectual levels, of various development activities in their inter-relation, and partly from overall job satisfaction. A first step to such comprehension is the need on the part of the field administrators to participate in goal setting as well as in policy formulation, particularly when policies

are spelt out in terms of concrete action programmes. Through such participation a clear perception of goals can occur to field administrators, and the policies of the organization can be fully understood in both letter and spirit."<sup>14</sup> This must be made effective all along the line.

1. Institutional/Administrative Reforms for Planning and People's Participation at the District/Block Levels:

According to the Draft Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83), the major problems resulting in a significant gap in planning and implementation in the earlier plans have been broadly classified under various groups as follows:<sup>15/16</sup>

- (a) Technical, administrative and managerial problems including lack of delegation of authority to subordinate organisation levels, delays in issuing sanctions, approvals, etc. and lack of specific assignment of responsibility and accountability for results;
- (b) Inadequacy of data base and information system;

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15 <sup>14</sup>. Amal Ray - Organizational Aspects of Rural Development, The World Press, Calcutta, 1976, pages 18-19.

16 <sup>15</sup>. Government of India, Planning Commission, Draft Sixth Five Year Plan: 1978-83, page 121.

- (c) Inadequate attention to inter-linkages, the lack of a systems approach and poor monitoring and evaluation/feed-back system.

It may also be stated here that though some efforts were made over the years to introduce decentralized planning, yet the work did not pick-up the required momentum. <sup>By and large, still</sup> Planning is not based on a sound analysis of the situation in a given region, mainly due to lack of a formalized system of data and information collection and analysis. It is not as if there is dearth of data. A number of reports flow from the district upwards but in the absence of <sup>proper</sup> analysis, they are of limited use to decision-makers. Consequently decisions are often taken in a piecemeal manner leading to serious gaps in implementation at the field level. A new administrative system needs to be devised which can select indicators that can succinctly identify rural problems in a given region and present data that can be used to identify and plan for a particular area.

Another related problem in local level planning, especially in the context of integrated rural development, is that one sector does not know what another is doing. There is very little of horizontal coordination and the District Collector in his capacity as the Chief Coordinator is the only person who gets to know about



different sectoral plans and their complementarity. This awareness about the complementarity of the programmes must percolate to other levels of officers at the local level so that inter-dependencies in a development programme could be better identified and appreciated.

With a view to strengthen the local level planning, the Planning Commission appointed<sup>a</sup> Working Group in November, 1977 under the chairmanship of Prof. M.L. Dantwala to prepare guidelines for block level planning. The Working Group submitted its report in 1978.

The Working Group stated that "the objective of economic policy and goals of national planning have been fairly well defined. The objectives of block level planning obviously have to be in conformity with national goals and as such should not ordinarily need reiteration. Even so, we feel that it will be helpful if the exercise on block level planning begins with an explicit statement of its main objectives."<sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup> In broad terms, the goals are:

- (a) Optimum utilization of the growth potential of the area leading to increase in income and employment.

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<sup>17</sup> 16. Government of India, Planning Commission, Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning, 1978, page 1.



- (b) Ensuring that a larger than proportionate gains of development accrue to the weaker sections of the population - small and marginal farmers, share-croppers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, etc.
- (c) Fulfilment of the minimum needs programme - health and medical facilities, drinking water, housing, education and supply of essential commodities through a public distribution system.
- (d) Building up of social and economic infra-structure to achieve the above objectives.
- (e) Reorienting the existing institutions/organizations in order to protect the interests of the poor.
- (f) Building up of appropriate organizations of the poor especially to protect them from exploitation.
- (g) Promotion of progressively more egalitarian structure of ownership of assets.
- (h) Augmenting the duration and productivity of employment of the poor and the under-employed in their existing occupations inter alia through upgrading of technology, imparting of skills and setting up of non-exploitative institutions of credit, marketing and extension.
- (i) Alleviating residual unemployment through employment on public works. <sup>27/8</sup>

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18 <sup>27.</sup> Ibid, p. 1-2.  
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Implicit in the emphasis on block level planning is the expectation that as a result of more intensive search for development potential and strengthening of the planning machinery and better informed planning process, the development process at the block level would be accelerated and intensified. New areas of feasible development at the block level would be identified and the programmes currently operating at the block level would be intensified.

Keeping in view the imperatives of vertical and horizontal linkages, the Working Group has recommended the placement of the planning team at the district headquarters. This arrangement will ensure integration of the block plans with the district plans. In fact, the preparation of block and district plans will be a part of the same exercise.

It has further recommended that the planning team at the district level - which will have the responsibility of preparing block plans - should consist of a core group consisting of (i) Chief Planner with adequate experience and quality of leadership to provide the right type of orientation to block level planning and inculcate team spirit to be able to coordinate with other members of the team, (ii) Economist/Statistician (Project formulation and evaluation), (iii) Cartographer/Geographer,

(iv) Agronomist, (v) Engineer (Irrigation/Civil), (vi) Industry Officer (small and cottage industries), and (vii) Credit Planning Officer. In addition to the above core staff, specialists may have to be engaged according to the needs of the area or the programme. For example, in a district where dairy farming is important, a dairy technologist may be needed. Therefore, it will be necessary to make adjustments in the composition of the planning team to suit the requirements of a particular situation and the need of the area to be covered.

For bringing about improvements in the planning, implementation and monitoring organizations, the Draft Sixth Plan (1978-83) also states that "Professional expertise will be inducted at all levels. In particular, such specialized full-time planning and monitoring cells will be set up at district levels and block levels. Planning machinery at the State level also will be further strengthened by providing specialist skills in State planning as well as technical departments. Monitoring and evaluation cells (where these do not exist at present) will be set up in projects, State departments and Central ministries . . . . . The block level plans will be prepared with full participation of voluntary agencies, professional institutions and the public. In the

district level planning process also, representatives of elected institutions, financial institutions and public, with sufficient understanding of the local socio-economic problems, will be involved."<sup>18</sup>

Alongwith the strengthening of the arrangements for planning at the district/block levels, it will also be necessary to establish suitable systems for the collection and analysis of the data required for planning. For this purpose, the agency of the District Statistical Officers could be made use of. Similarly, at the block level, it will be necessary to make proper arrangements for purposive collection, compilation and analysis of data on a regular and systematic basis.

At the implementation stage, reliable data for monitoring and evaluation of programmes is required. The present evaluation of programmes is mostly ex post facto. Concurrent evaluation would bring to light bottlenecks and promote better integration of activities. The present administrative system needs to be made more systematic, especially in information gathering and analysis, and has to recognize the significance of monitoring and evaluation for improved implementation of rural development programmes.

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18. Government of India, Planning Commission, -Draft Sixty Five Year Plan : 1978-83, p. 121.

This would also help in setting up a mutual feed-back system between the District, State and federal levels of Government.

Another problem in the sphere of realistic planning at local level is due to difficulties in budgeting and funding. The sectoral rather than regional presentation of plans is still the most widespread practice. The inability of higher levels of administration to indicate, even approximately, the level of resources that would be allocated to a particular area or service in an area poses a serious problem in comprehensive regional planning. Effective decentralization, whether in planning or implementation, requires the support of necessary resources besides authority.

In a rural planning project, being conducted at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, it has been found that no changes are occurring at the level of sectoral planning. The responsibility for integrating rural development planning is being pushed down to the district level alone. Apparently, the impression is that integration can be achieved by the local level officials while the higher levels do not need to change. Already, it is being found that adjusting inter-institutional arrangements at the local level have much wider implications both in

the area of planning and implementation. These need to be recognized and local level decentralization has to be effective in order to strengthen integrated rural planning and implementation.

For involving the people's representatives and other agencies besides the officers of the various Government departments in the planning process, it may be useful to have a system of setting up various working groups to discuss in detail the programmes of development to be taken up in different sectors on the basis of the guidelines issued by the State, the overall priorities and the local requirements and potentialities. It will be necessary to ensure that at the district/block levels, the plans do not turn out to be just a list of demands and that these take into account the constraints involved. For this purpose, it may be necessary to develop some objective criteria particularly for the spread of infra-structure items and social services like education, health, roads, etc. in terms of their existing locations/spread and need for strengthening the same for integrated development. For all this, proper arrangements for the collection, maintenance and analysis of data both at the district and block levels are obviously of vital importance. The objective analysis of data as ~~was~~ mentioned earlier should also be



made available to all concerned with the planning process for their enlightened participation and purposeful contribution.

2. Institutional/Administrative Reforms for Coordination at the District/Block Levels.

The concept of coordination in physiology denotes "the combined action of a number of muscles in a complex movement. In public administration, the definition is not different: coordination is the harmonious combined action of agents or functions towards a given objective."<sup>19</sup> 20  
Thus, coordination means synchronised action through keeping the various segments of an organization in proper relationship to each other for achieving its goals.

The efficient management of integrated rural development is a very demanding task and calls for well coordinated action on many fronts and all along the line. After the plan has been formulated and finalized and translated into the required number of programmes and activities, these have to be implemented effectively and efficiently and for this, coordinated action is of crucial importance. For illustration, some of the steps involved in effective management of agricultural production programme are mentioned below:

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20 19. Dimock & Dimock - Public Administration, 4th Edition, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., Page 402.

The seeds have to be procured, treated and distributed in time, the soils have to be tested and appropriate doses of fertilizers for different varieties of crops have to be suggested; the fertilizers and credit must be made available to the farmers in time and in appropriate quantities and arrangements have to be made for the protection of crops from pests and diseases; water has also to be supplied, again at the right time and in appropriate quantities and electricity has to be made available for the tubewells. At the same time, the farmers have also to be prepared for and involved in the use of required inputs and technology. Then the various programmes have also to be tailored to the different agro-climatic conditions prevailing in various parts of the country or even within different parts in the same State and at times same district.

The coordinated action in respect of all the above activities is obviously very important and also requires synchronized action on the part of all agencies involved in the process, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Community Development, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Co-operatives, Irrigation, Marketing, Electricity, Public Works, Industry, etc. Besides the developmental agencies there are other institutions like Commercial Banks, Rural Electrification Corporation, Agricultural Universities etc. which also play an important role. The inter-dependency among them needs to be appreciated by all the agencies. Even an agency like Agricultural Extension under the

Since effective coordination is very crucial both for planning and implementation, the District Coordination Officer should also be the Chief Planning Officer of the district.

This arrangement will also provide the required flexibility and operational effectiveness to the planning process.

Community Development Programme, must have adequate research and supplies support to be able to discharge its functions properly. Coordination will be more effective when the facts of inter-dependence and complementarity of different activities and agencies are clearly and squarely realized by all concerned.

In areas where democratic decentralization through Panchayati Raj Institutions has not yet been made operationally effective, the District Collector should be assisted in this work by another officer of nearly similar rank with clear-cut responsibility for coordination at the district level. <sup>3</sup> In the States like Maharashtra and Gujarat where effective democratic decentralization has taken place, such an arrangement already exists - an officer at the district level under the Zila Parishad is in charge of all development work in the district. Similarly, in the districts which are very large, there should be another officer at the Sub-Divisional level (besides the existing Civil SDOs) in charge of coordination and implementation. At the block level, this responsibility should rest with the Block Development Officer. It is also necessary to set up formal coordination committees at each level with the coordinating officers as chairmen. These coordination committees should comprise of all the top officers of various departments at these levels as also the representatives of the Panchayati Raj and other

*and these committees should meet as often as required.*

institutions and agencies concerned with the rural development in the respective areas. (4)

Besides the responsibility for coordination, these coordinating officers at the district/sub-divisional/Block levels should be made squarely responsible for achieving the results. Below them, this responsibility for implementation should be placed on the various departmental officers. The coordinating officers, among other things, should have the responsibility of initiating action well in time, if they visualize some problems or when the higher level officers have to be approached. Appropriate financial and executive authority should also be delegated to them. The delegation of powers and simplification of rules and procedures has been duly stressed in the Draft Sixth Plan (1978-83). It states that "further simplification of rules and procedures and setting up of time limits or norms for completing various types of work, together with delegation of financial and administrative powers will be attempted by each Government agency so as to minimize the problems experienced at the citizen administrative contact points and enable the citizens to get full benefit of plan schemes." 20 22

Though it will be necessary to equip the coordinating officers with reasonable authority but their performance

22 20. Government of India, Planning Commission - Draft Sixth Five Year Plan: 1978-83, Page 122.

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"It has been observed that frequent contacts between functionaries through large formal and informal meetings leads to greater promptness of action (used as a measure of coordination). More use of formal and informal meetings gives an opportunity for the people involved in the administrative net-work at various levels to understand better each others' problems.

To that extent, the bureaucratic element in the officials gets diluted while the non-officials come to understand organisational discipline, thus ~~contributing~~ *contributing* to a right perspective of the whole administrative process." 24 2)

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21) 24. A.P. Barnabas and Donald C. Pelz, Administering Agricultural Development, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1970, page 94.

23 21. Dimock & Dimock, ~~op.~~ *op.* cit. p. 403. *ye*





*through effective communication and appropriate information systems*

should be judged on the basis of their leadership and managerial qualities in terms of achieving the required results more by persuasion and carrying their colleagues and teams with them, rather than on the strength of their authority as "cooperation provides the foundation for effective coordination."<sup>21</sup> They should also be sufficiently exposed to this type of orientation through short duration training courses.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions should be involved in the implementation with authority to take decisions in respect of the location of various facilities like education, health, roads, etc. and for motivating/educating people for various programmes like family planning, adoption of new seed varieties and technology of production, organization of cooperatives, collection of overdues of cooperatives and other Government loans etc. These institutions should also give suggestions to the administration for improving policies <sup>and procedures</sup> where required and for bringing about better implementation of the programmes. These must receive the necessary consideration for effective and realistic ~~programmatic~~ performance.

### 3. Communication System for Vertical/Horizontal Flow of Information

"The term communication has many and varied meanings. To some it denotes the means or media of

<sup>21</sup> Dimock & Dimock, *op. cit.* p. 403.

passing information, for example, the telephone, telegraph or television. To others it has to do primarily with the channels of communication in the organization, such as the grapevine, the formal chain of command, the complaint box or the grievance procedure."<sup>22 23</sup> We may, however, consider communication as "... the act of inducing others to interpret an idea in the manner intended by the speaker or writer. The term is derived from the Latin word Communis, which means common. If we effect a communication of ideas, we have established a common meeting ground for understanding"<sup>23 25</sup> to achieve the goals of an organization. Effective communication is again very important as "without the means, the capacity and will to communicate, what we know as business, government, and community activities could not be."<sup>24 26</sup>

Like coordination, communication is also generally effected through more or less formal channels in an organizations and its effectiveness also depends to a large extent on the willing cooperation of all concerned.

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24 22. Edwin B. Flippo - Principles of Personnel Management, third edition, McGraw - Hill Kogakusha Ltd., page 420.

25 23. Ibid, page 420.

26 24. Paul Pigors and Charles A. Myers - Personnel Administration: A Point of View and Method, seventh edition, McGraw-Hill Kogakusha, Ltd., page 87.

Communication can be made effective through a variety of methods including open discussions at various levels involved in the process. At the same time, it is very necessary to establish suitable organizational arrangements for the collection, analysis and interpretation of information required for effective implementation of integrated rural development at different levels alongwith suitable arrangements for the both-way flow of information with reasonable frequency. For this purpose, it will also be necessary to fix clear-cut responsibility at different levels.

It may, however, be stated here that there is a need to strengthen the existing system of 'upward communication'. The 'downward communication' does not always work, mainly because it is authoritarian and does not take into account the psychology of the receiver. "Instead of starting out with that .....<sup>if</sup>the executive wants to 'get across', the executive should start out by finding out what subordinates want to know, are interested in, or, in other words, receptive to. This has emphasized the need for a wide measure of communication up the line. The upward communication comprises both information and perception about the performance of the organization at field level and about what is required to be done to

improve organizational functioning at that level."<sup>25</sup>

In the communication process at the field level, another area of vital importance is the process of communication between the administrator and the public. Several deficiencies have been observed at this level of communication. Attempts to understand the problems of non-elite rural groups through representative institutions are futile as these institutions are dominated by powerful and elite sections of society. The field administrators must improve their contacts with the common people particularly those belonging to the weaker sections of the society. This may require not only attitudinal changes suitably backed by institutional devices like organization of the rural poor and <sup>a</sup> vigilant press and an informed public opinion.

#### 4. Implementation Set-up at the Grass-Roots Level

The Department of Personnel & Administrative Reforms set up a Working Group in 1977 to examine the administrative structure and procedure for decentralized development specially the multiplicity of functionaries at the village level. The findings of <sup>the</sup> Group revealed that due to various reasons, in some areas, there has

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27 25. Amal Ray - Organisational Aspects of Rural Development, The World Press, Calcutta, 1976, pp. 23-24.

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been a proliferation of functionaries at the village level and growth of multi-channels and parallel hierarchies at other levels.<sup>26</sup>

At the village level, the farmer has been facing the problem of multiplicity of authorities for getting his requirements such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, credit, marketing facilities, etc. In some States, the farmer requires the Village Level Worker's clearance for obtaining improved seeds, fertilizers and credit required by him. He can get them only after the Village Level Worker prepares the farm plans. The clearance of the revenue official is required regarding the title of the land. Very often, the revenue functionary does not stay in the village and may also not be available without the villager having to spend considerable time and money.

In the above background, the Group recommended that as far as possible there should be three functionaries at the village level with non-overlapping functions. There should be a functionary for looking after the regulatory and enforcement<sup>functions</sup> such as the maintenance of procurement and distribution of essential commodities, small savings etc. The second functionary should be the Village

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and  
28 26. Personnel / Administrative Reforms Report of the Working Group on Rationalisation of Points of Contacts with Administration at the Village Level, New Delhi, 1977.



Level Worker. He should be an extension worker in the fields of agriculture and allied activities. His main functions would be servicing agriculture (in the wider sense) including crop production, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairying, poultry farming, piggery, soil and water conservation, land development, social forestry, bee-keeping, pisciculture etc. He should not only provide extension service but also guide the agriculturist in getting supply of inputs. The third functionary should perform what may be termed social service and civil functions such as drinking water supply, village and link roads, development programmes for rural youth, women and children and panchayat work. The various extension workers working under different special area programmes such as Small Farmers Development and Command Area Development should also be integrated in the above set-up and there should not be separate functionaries at the village level for executing these special programmes. All the jobs that are required to be performed at the village level should be entrusted to these three functionaries. When a farmer requires any specialist service such as artificial insemination for his cow, he will have to go to specialists who may be located at the Halka or Block Level. The generalist Village Level Worker and the panchayat functionary would be able to guide him. It may not be possible

nor might it be necessary to have three functionaries for each and every village. The jurisdiction of these functionaries which should generally be co-terminus should be determined taking into consideration factors such as population, area covered and workload. The headquarters of all these functionaries should be at the same place which should generally be the growth centre of the village covered.

For deciding about the area of jurisdiction of the village level functionaries, it will be necessary to take into account the number of families which will have to be attended to and also the distance to be covered. In the areas which are already well-developed, a smaller number of families may have to be assigned to the village level functionaries for better and more effective implementation of the various programmes.

As far as the institutional set-up at the village level is concerned, the Group recommended that there should be a single integrated service point which would meet almost all the needs of the villagers. This can only be a cooperative institution. The Group, therefore, recommended the setting up of integrated cooperative societies at the village level. This society is akin to the multi-purpose cooperative society or Large Size

Agricultural Multipurpose Societies (LAMPS), the Farmer's Service Society. This integrated society should function both as a credit society and <sup>as</sup> a service society. It should supply inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and agricultural implements, give short, medium and long term credit, and provide storage, processing and marketing facilities to its members. In tribal areas, it should even carry out barter trade till such time the tribal economy becomes well monetised. The Group recommended that all the credit that is flowing into the village through various financial agencies may be channelised through the integrated cooperative society. The dues of electricity board, etc. could also be collected by the integrated society. Ultimately, various dues of Government and Panchayat could be collected by this society.

However, in order to ensure that the credit requirements of the weaker sections of the rural society are properly taken care of, it is also necessary to reserve the bulk of the rural credit for the rural poor. For this, besides revamping the existing cooperative societies and giving effective reorientation to their operations in this direction, it will be useful to establish new cooperatives exclusively of the weaker groups in certain areas where the existing cooperative

structure did not have the required strength and resilience for speedy introduction of these changes.

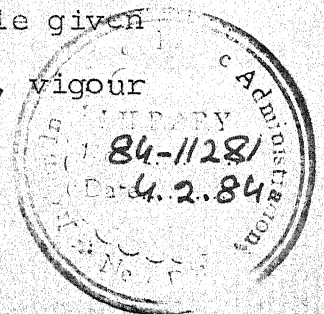
The reforms in the above direction are of crucial importance for effective management of the integrated rural development programme. These arrangements will also enable fixation of clear cut responsibilities for various functions involved at the village level.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS:

Administrative reforms for integrated rural development, as is borne out by the above exposition, must attend to in detail and in operational terms firstly, structures or organizational arrangements; secondly, procedures including rules and regulations; thirdly, processes as they impinge upon motivation and initiative; fourthly, the operational environment so as to make it aware and sensitive to the dynamics of change. It is only in a task-oriented environment that the problems of decision-making at appropriate levels, of coordination at both horizontal and vertical levels and administrative as well as technical linkages as called for by the programmatic requirements of the integrated rural development can be comprehended and effectively resolved. All this requires an intensive and continuous consideration in relation to the

structuring of the pattern of authority relationships, the fixation of accountability, keeping up the morale and motivation of field level staff and designing a system of communication and coordination.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the supporting mechanism of availability of supplies and inputs has to be properly organised to ensure that the credibility of the schemes as well as the field staff is not adversely affected. This is all the more so as the people-based integrated rural development aims to bring about social justice as well as create a spirit of self-reliance and promote productivity in the agricultural and other sectors of the rural economy. <sup>OT</sup> Though we have a long and varied experience of planned rural development in India and some good results have already been achieved yet the magnitude and complexity of the problems are still very great and consequently there is an urgent and pressing need to look into various aspects <sup>in</sup> ~~if~~ a systematic manner and bring about the required organizational/ institutional improvements <sup>as may facilitate the</sup> ~~without any further loss of~~ <sup>new</sup> ~~concept and strategy of integrated rural development~~ <sup>time.</sup> To bring about administrative reforms to meet the <sup>in</sup> ~~demands of decentralized~~ <sup>adequate</sup> development is indeed a very challenging and difficult task and calls for continuous planning, implementation and review of the appropriate arrangements. <sup>X</sup> The goals are, however, attainable given adequate will to pursue them with determination, vigour and vision.

<sup>29</sup> 27. Amal Ray - Organizational Aspect of Rural Development, Calcutta, 1976.



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X The problems of strategic, operational & institutional nature participation in the process of planning & implementation, as revealed by our broad survey and analysis of the Indian scene merit continuing attention at different levels of politico-administrative system.